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*D*ear Friend,

A woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every three minutes, and every 12 minutes a woman dies from it. This year in the United States there will be approximately 181,000 women diagnosed with breast cancer and 43,000 will die from this disease.

Thanks to the Breast Cancer Act, passed by the Legislature in 1993, nearly 160,000 uninsured or underinsured women age 40 and over have received breast cancer screening and diagnostic services. Detection needs to be followed by effective treatment in order to save lives.

Currently in California, funding for breast cancer treatment for individuals who do not qualify for Medi-Cal, or who do not have health insurance, comes from a \$12 million Blue Cross grant which will soon expire. A proposed new law, Assembly Bill 40, will provide additional funds to create a similar program. If approved by the legislature and Governor, the program will make available \$3 million for breast cancer treatment.

For more information on this proposed law, or other legislation relating to health care, please contact my office.

Sincerely,



GEORGE NAKANO
Assemblymember, 53rd District



Courtesy of Assemblymember

GEORGE
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*Breast
Cancer*

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*the best
prevention is
early detection*

Basic Facts About Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the leading cause of death among women aged 40-44 and the leading cause of cancer death in women 15-54. One out of every eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.

Approximately 80 percent of women who develop breast cancer have no family history of the disease. All women are at risk and there are no known causes or cures for breast cancer. More often than not, breast lumps are not cancerous, but all lumps should be examined by a health care professional.

Early detection is the best way to beat breast cancer. Mammography and clinical breast examinations have been shown to reduce breast cancer mortality. Amazingly, fewer than half of the women age 40 and over in the U.S. have an annual mammogram. Most women who found breast cancer in its early stages and received treatment are alive and well five years later.

Myths and Facts about the Risk of Developing Breast Cancer

Myth: Breast cancer is preventable.
Fact: There is no known way to prevent breast cancer, and the cause of the disease has not been determined. Early detection followed by prompt treatment offers the best chance for surviving breast cancer.

Myth: Only women get breast cancer.
Fact: Breast cancer is rare in men, but it does occur in roughly 1,000 men each year. In normal men, small rudiments of breast ducts may be found in the center of the breast, beneath the areola and nipple. The vast majority of breast cancers in men, therefore, arise in this area, rather than in the outer quadrants so commonly affected in women.

Myth: Only women with known “risk factors” get breast cancer.
Fact: Over 70 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no identifiable “risk factors.” All women are at risk and risk increases with age.

Myth: Only women with a family history of breast cancer are at risk.
Fact: The majority of women with breast cancer have no family history of the disease. A woman whose mother, sister, daughter or grandmother had breast cancer has an increased risk of developing the disease.

Myth: Breast cancer is contagious.
Fact: Cancer is not a communicable disease. It results from uncontrolled growth of cells in a person’s own body. These changes cannot affect other people’s cells.

Myth: Small-breasted women cannot get breast cancer.
Fact: The amount of breast tissue a woman has does not affect her risk of developing breast cancer.

Myth: Breast feeding causes or protects against breast cancer.
Fact: No studies have shown that breast feeding causes breast cancer. Some studies have suggested that breast feeding may reduce a woman’s risk of developing the disease. However, studies are still ongoing on this topic. A woman who breast feeds her children can still get breast cancer.

Early Detection and Mammography

Why should I have a mammogram?
A mammogram can find breast cancer that is too small for you, your doctor, or your nurse to feel. If you are age 50 or over, the National Cancer Institute recommends getting a mammogram every one to two years. Women in their 40s who are at average risk for breast cancer should also get a mammogram every one to two years. Women who are at high risk of breast cancer should seek expert medical advice about whether to begin mammography before age 40.

What is meant by high and average risk for breast cancer?
Most women are considered to be at average risk for breast cancer. The risk of breast cancer increases with age. There are a number of risk factors that cause a woman to be at high risk for breast cancer, and women should consult a health professional to determine their risk level. Some examples of risk factors are:

- *Having a first child before age 30*
- *Other breast disease*
- *Family history of breast cancer*

How often should I get a mammogram?
Cancer can show up at any time, so one mammogram in a lifetime may not be enough. It is best to speak to a qualified medical provider.

Where can I get a mammogram?

- Ask your doctor or nurse.
- Ask your local health department or clinic.
- Call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

Important Resources

American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
(1-800-227-2345)

American Cancer Society
Los Angeles — (213) 386-6102
Torrance — (310) 670-2650

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service
1-800-4-CANCER
(1-800-422-6237)

Breast Cancer Foundation
1-800-I-M-AWARE
(1-800-462-9273)

National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organization (NABCO)
1-800-719-9154

